

I2T Summit
results

Women in
Energy

Conferencing
risks

Safety
resolutions

• CLOSED • **Circuit**

WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION

JANUARY 2021

Maintaining balance



8



16

CLOSED Circuit

VOL. 43 NO. 1, JANUARY 2020

Editor: PHILIP REED

Graphic Designer: GRANT KUHN

Do you have an idea for a story?
Contact reed@wapa.gov



**Western Area
Power Administration**

WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION
P.O. Box 281213
Lakewood, CO 80228-8213
720.962.7050
www.wapa.gov | publicaffairs@wapa.gov

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS ISSUE  PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

Contents

Maintaining balance in trying times	1
<i>Administrator and CEO Mark A. Gabriel shares the theme for 2021.</i>	
I2T Summit goes virtual	4
<i>COVID-19 moved the Inclusion, Innovation and Technology Summit online.</i>	
And the winners are...	7
<i>See the many employees who were recognized with I2T Awards.</i>	
Women in Energy Conference looks forward	8
<i>A virtual conference provides women in the industry with support and guidance.</i>	
Dispatcher recognized with Leadership Award	10
<i>Supervisory Power System Dispatcher Christine Henry receives the award from RMEL.</i>	
WAPA strategy maximizes value of data	12
<i>Asset Management believes in Data as a Strategic Asset.</i>	
TAP updates guide WAPA's strategic focus	14
<i>Learn what TAP updates are and how they benefit the organization.</i>	
Keeping WAPA safe in 2021	16
<i>Safety and Occupational Health shares its New Year's resolutions.</i>	
Rapid Recaps	18
Brief Transmissions	18

On the cover

WAPA and SMUD collaborate on transmission line work in northern California, taking care to follow social distancing practices.
(Photo by Will Schnyer)





Maintaining balance in trying times

By Administrator and CEO
Mark A. Gabriel

2020

was a historic year, heralding a level of change we could not possibly have anticipated. In fact, when we selected “Engaging in a World of Change” at the end of 2019 as our theme for 2020, we had no idea how prescient a choice it would turn out to be.

continued on Page 2

In spite of the worldwide upheaval brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, WAPA adapted and persevered. Against the backdrop of adversity and uncertainty, we managed to continue successfully delivering on our mission in 2020.

Of course, we did more than deliver on our mission. Our accomplishments this year are many, even as we adjusted to a new way of working and living. As just a small sampling, we:

- Marketed 26,985 gigawatt-hours of hydropower, or 100.3% of average.
- Transitioned 1,500 employees to maximized telework in four days.

- Had our pandemic plan sent by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to every utility in America.
- Returned \$272.3 million to the U.S. Treasury for a total of \$2.6 billion over the past eight years.
- Saved or avoided over \$113 million in costs since 2014 through continuous process improvement activities.
- Initiated a fiber pilot project with two Rocky Mountain customers and one Sierra Nevada customer.
- Supported California during its energy emergency Aug. 14-19 with a total of 5,400 megawatt-hours.



Responding to COVID-19 has presented a major evolutionary step for WAPA, and indeed all government agencies and utilities, to deploy innovative new processes, procedures and tools in line with the 21st century.

For 2021, our theme is a single, simple word: "Balance."

As we adapt and evolve in this energy frontier, one that now includes COVID-19, it will be critical for us to embody strength, resilience, unity and leadership while also being mindful of our enduring mission, reliability, regional differences and collaborative culture with our customers.

It is not beyond the imagination to believe that we will have a fully integrated market in the West in the next two to three years. We have been preparing for this eventuality with Organizational Approach to Markets, the Mountain West Transmission Group and our transition into the California Independent System Operator Energy Imbalance Market and the Southwest Power Pool Western Energy Imbalance Service.

Our goal is to optimally position WAPA as a major player at the markets table to ensure we can influence their development and preserve and strengthen the value of WAPA and our customers. This requires a delicate balance between leadership and collaboration.

We operate a reliable system, weathering disruptions, including storms, wildlife interactions, vehicle accidents, routine maintenance and emergency situations. We anticipate investing \$1.3 billion in our system over the next decade to ensure that reliability.

Resilience is the ability to prevent, withstand and recover from disruptive threats and events—an important distinction from reliability as we balance our available personnel and funds.

This has also been a difficult year with a record-breaking wildfire season across much of our territory. Thanks to proactive vegetation management, we avoided what could have been an even worse situation, requiring rebuilding and repairs. Yet, wildfires were only the most visible resilience challenge we faced.

The California energy crisis was a harbinger of resilience challenges to come due to the energy transition and lack of transmission buildout. We continue to be concerned that the long-term contracts needed to build more transmission are lacking in these uncertain times.

SPP and the Midcontinent Independent System Operator both announced limited transmission capacity that is preventing new generation sources from being added to the grid. We are operating closer and closer to system limits with each passing year. Cyber attackers are becoming more prolific and advanced in their techniques.

Outages are less acceptable for any reason and for any duration due to electricity's integral role to our economy and way of life.

Upgrades are expensive, and one enduring question is how to strike the appropriate cost balance between those who use these upgrades and those who benefit from projects that support the national energy resilience and security.

In 2021, we will focus on workload planning to better balance our resources against our many competing organizational priorities. If we were able to better match our resources with business needs, we could more efficiently and effectively complete the many pressing projects before us.

This year, we will focus on documenting operations and maintenance projects to establish a baseline level of work, particularly for our craft employees.

Although we are focusing on the craft first, these projects take a cohort of WAPA functions and people, from Operations conducting system reliability studies, to Natural Resources performing environmental reviews and land acquisition, to Design and Engineering to Procurement, to Construction and, finally, to our crews. Eventually, the work done by all these functions will be captured in this initiative.

I greatly appreciate your continued engagement and support of WAPA and look forward to continuing our journey together to create a bright, valuable and relevant future. Together, we will achieve and sustain balance amid the many opportunities and challenges before us.

Stay safe, remain socially distanced and wear your mask. □

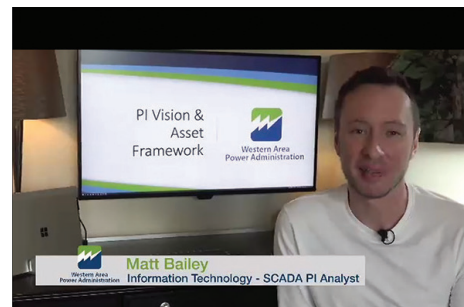
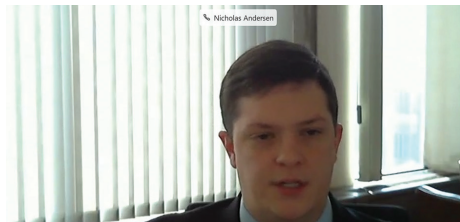
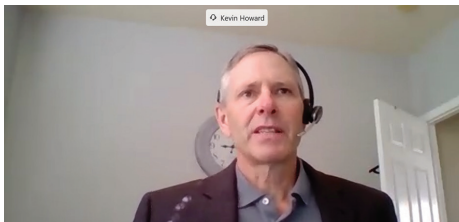
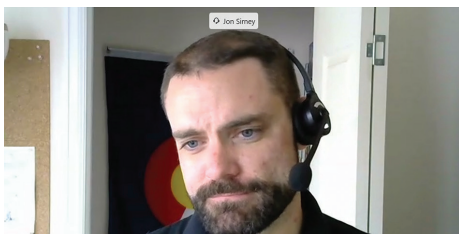
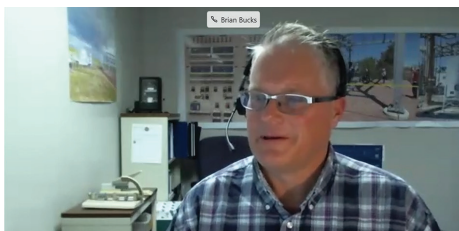


A photograph of a silver laptop on a wooden desk. The laptop screen displays the text "I2T Summit goes virtual" in white, bold, sans-serif font on a blue background. In the background, there are blurred items including a stack of books, a trophy, and a pink and white striped object.

I2T Summit goes virtual

On the afternoon of Nov. 18, WAPA kicked off its Inclusion, Innovation and Technology

Summit, or I2T Summit, with the theme Innovation Takes Everyone in a Changing World. It was the fifth event of its kind, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic it looked and was organized much differently than it had been in the past.



The 2020 Inclusion, Innovation and Technology Summit took place entirely online, with guest speakers participating remotely and I2T Award winners presenting their innovations via prerecorded video.

COVID-19 put the ethos of the I2T Summit to the test. With the event serving as an annual celebration of inclusion, innovation and technology, would it be able to illustrate those concepts itself, adapting nimbly to these unprecedented circumstances?

As Administrator and CEO **Mark A. Gabriel** put it in his opening remarks, “The saying goes, ‘Necessity is the mother of invention.’ This year, we hit the motherlode of necessity due to the pandemic.”

The I2T Committee decided early in the year to postpone the event from its usual summer timeslot to November. This was done in the hopes that COVID-19 would have at least begun to recede as a threat and in-person gatherings would again be possible. This, of course, did not happen, and it was up to the team to reimagine the I2T Summit as an entirely virtual event.

The necessity of change also provided an opportunity to reevaluate and evolve other aspects of the I2T Summit.

New times

The biggest difference was the fact that the previous events were held in person, with an effort made each year to include as many attendees as possible.

The I2T Summit had traditionally been hosted at either Headquarters or regional offices, with the event

streamed to attendees across WAPA’s footprint. While this had initially been done in the name of inclusion, it ended up serving as important experience when creating an entirely virtual event this year.

On the bright side, an all-virtual event meant that many of the standard considerations were no longer an issue.

“There are a million little details that need to be considered for an onsite event,” said Electrical Engineer and I2T Committee Chair **Jackie Brusoe**. “Parking, security, travel arrangements, room reservations, seating charts and A/V equipment, to name only a few, all need to be sorted out well in advance.”

According to Brusoe, the fact that these considerations would no longer require logistical bandwidth made the planning easier.

“Note that I said ‘easier,’” she emphasized. “Not ‘easy.’”

For every typical consideration that wouldn’t be a concern this year, there would be at least one new one that would.

“To our knowledge, an event on this scale was a first for WAPA, and there were a lot of unknowns and what-ifs to work through,” said Brusoe.

The virtual event provided room for experimenting with the format.

Previously, I2T Summits had been single-day affairs. This made sense, as participants, guests and attendees

would need to make travel and lodging arrangements. Keeping the entire event confined to a single day made these things less complicated.

Without those concerns, however, the decision was made to split the various activities of the I2T Summit across two days, more easily allowing attendees to tune in for the segments that most interested them.

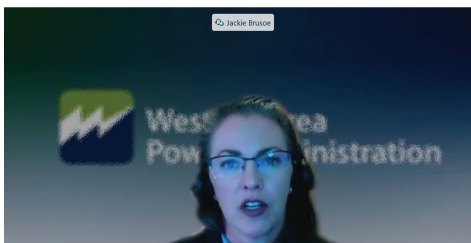
“One of the big upsides of a virtual event was the ability to enable more participation, simply by being able to participate from one’s own computer versus having to travel,” said Brusoe. “Along those same lines, it was easier to secure guest speakers.”

The increased flexibility with speakers led to three well-received presentations by the I2T Summit’s guests of honor.

These were Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Department of Energy Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security and Emergency Response **Nicholas Andersen**; Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories Director of Sales and Customer Service **Matt Leoni**; and Southwest Power Pool President and CEO **Barbara Sugg**. Andersen and Leoni spoke on day one, with Sugg kicking off day two.

The other major difference between the days was that the I2T Award Ceremony was held on day one and the Innovation Challenge on day two.

continued on Page 6



The hosts and speakers kept the virtual event moving in real time, with the agenda being very similar to the in-person events of the past.

An innovative Innovation Challenge

The Innovation Challenge is an annual tradition during which participants team up with others from across WAPA to brainstorm solutions to real-world issues facing the organization.

In previous years, each team was given a matter of hours to meet, study the problem, discuss potential solutions and present their idea to a panel of judges. This time, with so much changing already, the Innovation Challenge did some experimenting as well.

"One thing I kept hearing from past participants is that they wished they knew the Innovation Challenge topics in advance," said Power System Dispatcher Trainer and Innovation Challenge Chair **Jon Sirney**. "I thought it might be a good idea to give that a try. So, on the Monday before the I2T Summit, I met with the participants and presented the issues for them to address. They were able to take as much or as little time as they liked before the Innovation Challenge on Nov. 19 to meet and prepare their solutions."

Another innovative concept this year was soliciting employees for their thoughts on what issues should be addressed through the Innovation Challenge.

Unsurprisingly, nearly all of the issues submitted by employees were related in some way to COVID-19. Sirney and his team selected two topics for the participants to brainstorm: how to improve virtual meetings and how to facilitate virtual training and knowledge retention.

With the new approach to the agenda, there was one final question to address.

"Perhaps our biggest challenge we were trying to tackle was how to keep the audience's attention," said Brusoe. "At an in-person event, people pay attention because they're physically in the room. With a virtual event, there can be a lot of distraction. We worked hard to create a program that was worth everyone's time."

Execution

In order to keep the I2T Summit engaging in a virtual format, Brusoe worked closely with Information Technology to create a series of videos.

"Usually with virtual events, attendees end up basically watching a PowerPoint presentation," said Electrical Engineer and I2T Committee Chair **Brian Bucks**. "It's difficult to keep that interesting over long periods of time, so we wanted to add some visual variety."

Brusoe and IT worked with Public Affairs to prepare a collection of videos in advance. They were screened periodically throughout the two-day event. In many cases, the winners appeared in videos to discuss the initiatives that earned them I2T Awards.

"There isn't normally time for an acceptance speech or anything along those lines," Bucks explained. "There are too many winners every year for something like that. This was a nice middle ground. It kept things varied for the audience and gave a lot of our winners a chance to speak about their innovative successes. It worked out well."

The number of I2T Award nominations had increased from around 15 nominations in previous years to 40.

The virtual format also allowed for more-convenient Q&A opportunities with the guest speakers. The audience was able to type questions into a chat window which would then be relayed after their presentations. The result was an even more interactive experience than what the event had been before.

Room to grow

The I2T Summit was a success, with few of the technical hiccups that one might have expected of a first-time event this large. Any unforeseen issues that did rear their heads were addressed promptly.

The very nature of the event acknowledges that there is always

room to grow, however, and the I2T Committee is already brainstorming improvements that can be made in coming years.

"An unexpected problem was in communicating the event information," said Brusoe. Despite regular WAPA-wide emails and postings to the organization's intranet, employees still were not seeing the information they needed. "The sheer number of emails I received in the 24 hours before the event asking for the WebEx information was overwhelming for me, and probably frustrating for employees."

Additionally, an ongoing challenge is enabling participation from members of the craft community, who spend far more time in the field than at their computers.

"The I2T Team discusses this at length," Brusoe said. "Unfortunately, we have not figured out how to overcome the barriers ... yet."

Those are questions for next year, however; the team behind the event is satisfied with the high quality of 2020's I2T Summit, which ended up illustrating the concept of innovation in ways that were not originally intended.

"Innovation does take everyone in a changing world but, in reality, innovation takes everyone all the time," said Gabriel in his remarks. "The world will always be changing. Those changes may come from rapid upheaval in the organization and the world, like we are seeing with COVID-19, but they are much more likely to come from within our people each day striving to make a difference."

He concluded by thanking the attendees and participants for once again spotlighting WAPA's culture of innovation.

"Thank you for caring enough about WAPA, our mission, our customers and our people to expend your time and energy making the WAPA of tomorrow a better place than the WAPA of today," he said. "It is because of you that we will be able to secure a place for a relevant and valuable WAPA in the future." □

And the winners are...

A large number of employees were recognized for their innovative work on a variety of projects with I2T Awards.

Mission Critical Customer Services

Colorado River Storage Project Environment Team

- Shane Capron
- Chrystal Dean
- Craig Ellsworth
- Derek Fryer
- Clayton Palmer
- Jerry Wilhite

Real Time Total Transfer Capability Project

- Matt Veghte

Grid Resilience

High Impact Intermediate System Solution Implementation

- Gerry Gasca
- Corinna Gonzales
- Jason Haxton
- Brad Nelson
- Jordan Paulson
- Eric Skinner
- Jason Sporer
- Justin Williams

COVID-19 Phased Re-Entry Planning and WAPA Facility Status Tracking

- Kayti Bashore
- Gil Flores
- Steve Gurzenski
- Jennifer Neville
- Ben Nichols
- Ty Roach
- Wendy Short
- Jenny Tardif

EOC Policy Team

- Julia Duffy
- Carl Durrett
- Robin Johnson
- Nikki King
- Ron Klinefelter
- Kellie Petty
- Philip Reed
- Teresa Waugh

Asset Management 2.0

Acquisition and Utilization of 3D Lidar Scanner

- Corey Diekman
- Kimberly Dorsett
- Gregory Hansen
- Mike Korhonen
- Ed Sanchez
- Tonya Spencer
- David Tucker

Partnership to Preserve Peak Reliability's Historical Synchrophasor and Power Simulation Data

- Sean Erickson
- Jodi Jensen
- Koji Kawamura
- Jodee Miller
- Josh Moyers

Implementation of PI Vision and Use of PI Asset Framework

- Matthew Bailey
- Marcia Riddle
- Kevin Stephens

People and Organization

Desert Southwest Remote Mock Audit

- Kim Bentley
- Chris Johnson
- Barry Jones
- Al Slucher

Deployment of Skype for Business

- Lishi Chu
- Kimberly Dorsett
- Denise Elkin
- Shea Knorr
- Pattie Musk
- Bich Nguyen
- Jerry Smith
- Jason Sporer

UGP Biological Risk Assessment

- Alyssa Fellow

Development of Facility Management Workcenters in Maximo

- Corey Clowers
- Rita Erickson
- William Hamby
- Barry Palakodety
- Dinesh Shenoy
- Jaime Sopena

Rocky Mountain Use of MS Stream for T-Line Video

- Cory Ginn

Research, Development & Automated Installation of MS O365 in Remote Work Environment

- Tom Donaldson

Headquarters Managers Dashboard

- Gwen Aragon
- Larry Baugh
- Tim Clark
- Lisa McNeil
- Deb O'Rourke

Knowledge Management Program

- John Flynt

Use of Knowledge Management for Fiscal Operations Training

- Ashley Armstrong
- Carolyn Burg
- Jessica Coconis
- John Flynt
- Rhonda Frakes
- Dan Hoellein
- Donna White

Wolf Creek 3-Breaker Ring DCS Relay Protection Improvements

- Knut Aakhus
- Kyle Conroy
- David Fox
- Joseph Liberatore
- Joseph Maher
- Joshua Moyers
- Timothy Slater
- Mitchell Trounce

EPTC Adaptation of Training Delivery Method to VILT

- Karl Fittinger
- Joseph Hose
- Joe Liberatore
- Cody Mitchell
- Tim Slater
- Leah Wilson
- Lisa Yuma

UGP EMMO Modernization of Knowledge Sharing

- Darrick Davis
- Brent Garvey
- Jodi Knutson
- Curt Kunkel
- Neil Lindgren
- Paul Rodriguez
- Judy Shimek
- Mark Thyne
- Chris Tinsley

Power Marketing Administration Shared Service Center Human Resources Monthly Download Webinar

- Joseph Hose
- Cody Mitchell

Use of DOE Business Intelligence and Tableau for Category Management Obligations Reporting

- Richard Harper
- Michael Lowe

Rocky Mountain Automation of Invitation for Bid Process

- Richard Harper
- Michael Lowe
- Eileen Ray
- Leslie Sayre
- Benjamin Siltman
- Cansu Teano
- Todd Tetrault

Rocky Mountain / Desert Southwest SCADA Cutover Enhancements

- Lee Loucks

Ground Cable Sizing Application

- Nick Collins
- Tom Howard
- Eric Weisbender
- Gary Zevenbergen

UGP VHF VoIP Project

- Michael Grafton
- Scott Haslem

Station Service Design Standardization and Improvements

- Tyler McCready
- Kyle Vaughn

UGP Commissioning Checklist Generator

- John Beuning
- Travis Keller
- Kerry Kilen
- Charles Upgren
- Kevin Ven Huizen

Upper Great Plains Miles City Interlock Cover Improvement

- Ben Blaquiere
- Darin Bullock
- Darren Gress
- Kerry Kilen

Installation of Fault Indicators on Upper Great Plains MMO FP-WP 34.5-kV Line

- Travis Kittleson

Sierra Nevada Use of Commercial Off-the-Shelf Hydraulic Ram for Breaker Testing

- Charles Forbes
- Sam Lake

Unmanned Aerial Systems Program

- Paul Inman
- David Katich
- Deborah Rock
- Rich Westra
- Jason Wientjes
- Jonathan Zub



Women in Energy Conference looks forward

By Linda Swails

Last year's EUCI Leadership Conference for Women in Energy, held Dec. 8-9, featured some of the most accomplished women in the industry from around the country, their presentations describing their achievements, disappointments and lessons learned throughout their careers.

The conference kicked off with a presentation from ISO New England Director Cheryl LaFleur, who is a former Federal Energy Regulatory Commission commissioner.

LaFleur spoke on the topic of unblocking women's paths to leadership positions. She shared that the biggest thing she has learned in her professional career is that everyone has ups and downs, professionally, and one can develop a tendency to compare themselves unfavorably with others.

Instead of engaging in this negative tendency, she suggested that attendees "bloom where we are planted," do a good job where they are, continue to develop professionally and seek opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and experience.

LaFleur emphasized the importance of networking to build and strengthen both personal and professional relationships to stay connected. She suggested that this connection can be maintained either virtually, for example via virtual coffee breaks, or in person, by showing interest in others and what is happening in their lives.

She suggested attendees organize a group of "cheerleaders" who will cheer them on when times are difficult in their professional careers and whom they can support as well when they encounter their own bumps in the road. To accomplish this, she suggested using technology such as LinkedIn to get advice from others in the industry.

Finally, LaFleur recommended that women in leadership positions work with other women and those of diverse backgrounds coming up behind them, and offer them an opportunity to develop into the next generation of leaders in the energy industry.

A variety of topics

The conference included a variety of informative presentations with "knowledge nuggets" on various topics including leadership, difficult conversations, gender inequality and the importance of mentors and sponsors in leadership development.

Some common themes throughout the conference were the importance of building trust, listening with respect, developing problem-solving skills and seeking opinions and perspectives different than one's own.

Many of the speakers acknowledged a common human frailty of making mistakes during their career. Regardless of one's profession or position in the organizational hierarchy, everyone makes mistakes. The speakers suggested acknowledging those mistakes and learning from them.

Another topic was implicit bias, defined as prejudice or unsupported judgements in favor of or against a thing, person or group in a way that is usually considered unfair.

Implicit bias is reflected in one's attitudes and beliefs and can negatively impact how people think both personally and professionally. Everybody has implicit bias and frequently they are not aware of what their implicit biases are. Implicit bias is evolutionary and is hardwired into the human brain.

The key to combatting implicit bias is developing awareness of one's individual implicit bias, minimizing its negative effect on thoughts and actions.

Embracing change was another important leadership quality that was discussed. Speakers suggested seeking new opportunities, even if they are outside of our comfort zone, as we often do not give ourselves enough credit for the knowledge and experience we already possess. New and challenging opportunities expand our knowledge and experience and prepare us for future opportunities.

Mentorship and engagement

The presenters acknowledged the importance of mentors in their professional development. They advised selecting mentors who are authentic

and who will provide constructive support and feedback. Mentoring relationships can be both formal and informal, and each type serves a purpose.

Another suggestion was to seek opportunities to engage with those outside of our normal groups of contacts, as their experience and perspectives are important to consider. They suggested engaging with the "quiet" introverts who may not routinely contribute to discussions, as they have valuable insights and ideas.

The presenters described their accomplishments and how their careers evolved, sometimes through nontraditional paths, and how they rose to senior leadership positions in the energy industry.

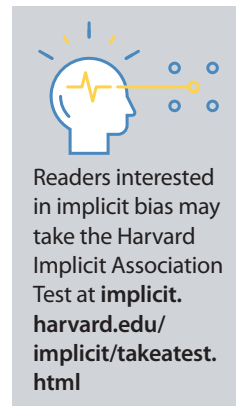
They discussed taking risks, seeking out or creating opportunities for themselves to expand their experience, working hard and pursuing opportunities to develop their industry knowledge at various organizational levels and in male-dominated functional areas.

The good news is that women are gaining presence at all organizational levels of leadership in the energy industry, paving the way for the next generation of women leaders.

The last segment of the conference focused on trends in the energy industry, such as engaged customers, the growth of renewables and distributed energy resources, pervasive use of technology, workforce transformation and increased investment in grid resilience and modernization.

These trends will result in a transformation in the industry requiring a workforce skilled in technology. That technology-savvy workforce will have an expectation of a remote work environment resulting in a shift in the traditional culture of the energy industry. □

Note: Swails is a public utilities specialist.



Dispatcher recognized with Leadership Award

In late September, Supervisory Power System Dispatcher **Christine Henry** received the Industry Leadership Award from RMEL, formerly the Rocky Mountain Electrical League.

“The Industry Leadership Award recognizes an individual whose leadership has made contributions that have made an impact within their organization,” according to RMEL. “Recipients usually have more than 10 years of experience in the industry. These individuals are often active in various industry affiliations, associations and/or organizations that serve the electric energy industry.”



Closed Circuit sat down with Henry to discuss the award.

“Tell us a little bit about your background and what ultimately brought you to WAPA.”

I began in the industry in 1990 at a small utility in southern New Jersey. I moved to California in 1997 to pursue an offer to assist in the startup of the California Independent System Operator. I held several positions there, including grid operations shift manager and manager of markets.

I was interested in returning to operations and was offered a position at WAPA in Sierra Nevada. I was hired as a transmission and switching operations dispatcher in 2006. After a year, I transferred to the automatic generation control dispatch position. In 2008, I was awarded the transmission and switching operations dispatcher supervisory position.

Describe your role at WAPA.

I provide support to our dispatch staff and to our customers related to transmission services. The transmission and switching operations dispatchers coordinate the daily activities of the work being performed by our maintenance staff and customers. Our primary focus is to maintain the safety and reliability of the grid. I interact regularly with customers to provide assistance to meet their needs and I work closely with management to achieve our corporate goals.

I have led multiple projects at SN and coordinated efforts for the

control room operations during wildfire events. I am an active member of the Inclusion and Diversity Committee as well as an instructor. Also, I have been a chairperson for our current energy management system vendor and am an active participant in WAPA's Common EMS project.

How does it feel to be recognized this way by RMEL?

It was quite a surprise. It is nice to know that I am respected by my peers and management. It has been an honor to serve in many aspects of our industry, as well as RMEL.

What has been your experience working with RMEL?

I presented at the RMEL Transmission Resiliency, Response and Restoration Symposium in 2019 in Golden, Colorado. I also delivered the lessons learned from the Carr Fire in 2018.

Of what accomplishment are you most proud?

I am grateful to have the many opportunities that I have been able to pursue at WAPA, within my area of responsibility and beyond. I have managed several projects including migrations to new and upgraded EMS projects, phone systems and training programs.

Although it was some time ago, I am proud of my role in coordinating the transformation of our outdated Alternate Control Center to our current one. Hands down, this was an

accomplishment for many reasons and quite rewarding.

What is your personal philosophy of leadership?

A good leader listens and observes. They allow personnel to try new avenues to tackle new challenges. Having a positive attitude with a touch of appropriate humor goes a long way. Being transparent with communication, having an intuition for emotional intelligence and providing a psychologically safe environment is critical.

Finally, honesty and integrity are invaluable in leading a highly functional team. Applying WAPA's core values are a great way to enable a leader to be effective and valued.

What is one piece of advice you have for WAPA employees wishing to grow and develop as leaders?

Find a mentor. Take your time and watch leaders whose style you can relate to, who are successful and who can bring people together to work toward a common goal.

Are there any other thoughts you would like to share?

Be consistent in the workplace and be true to the values that are important to you. Always remember to allow yourself to acknowledge your weaknesses and build on your strengths. Do what you enjoy and you will be successful. □



WAPA strategy maximizes value of data

By Kevon Storie

In this digital age, every large complex organization produces mountains of data—on customers, equipment, services, finances, every aspect of its operations. The challenge is turning these raw, unprocessed nuggets of information into something of value to the business. Data as a Strategic Asset is WAPA's answer to this challenge of converting data into sound business decisions.

Gotta have a plan

WAPA's streamlined 2021 Tactical Action Plan includes Data as a Strategic Asset, recognizing the importance of a planned, consistent approach to managing the organization's data.

Data collection at WAPA is not new. For decades, business units have gathered the facts and statistics relevant to their specific tasks and responsibilities. There was overlap, of course, with some units collecting the same data but measuring it in different ways and recording it in different formats. This approach didn't pose much of a problem until 21st-century information technology released a geyser of data and a host of new platforms to manage it.

Technology also brought rapid change to the utility industry, requiring a more integrated way of doing business. Operational decisions must now reckon with joint dispatching, energy imbalance markets, regional transmission organizations and many other industry changes, along with advancements in artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Data is the key to keeping up with this evolution, remaining fiscally responsible and meeting increasingly complex business goals, but only if it is efficiently collected, stored, managed and governed. WAPA's data strategy will bring order, accuracy and value to its data, turning it into a strategic asset.

This is the way

In June 2019, the Office of Management and Budget issued the Federal Data Strategy describing its 10-year vision for accelerating the use of data to deliver on mission, serve the public and maintain resources while protecting security, privacy and confidentiality. A WAPA committee of subject matter experts adapted the OMB document to create the Data Strategy Roadmap, WAPA's vision for a data-driven, information-centric organization.

Like every journey, data management must begin with placing one foot

in front of the other. The roadmap lays out a series of 10 steps, or strategies, to bring all the disparate data sets and management approaches together in an integrated WAPA-wide system.

In 2021, WAPA will be focusing on four steps:

Determine what data has the greatest business value to the organization. Not all data is created equal; some of those nuggets are worth more than others to WAPA's business operations and decision making. For example, the transmission asset data WAPA's Asset Management program collects is crucial to making informed decisions on repairs and replacements. AM is working with Operations and Maintenance to develop processes that ensure data quality and accuracy. Identifying the valuable data and making it the focus of management efforts is what sets strategy apart from mere data wrangling.

Define strategic business goals or outcomes to achieve through data and analytics. If you don't know what the question is, you won't know the answer when you see it. WAPA must identify specific business questions that can be answered through data analysis. For instance, Power Operations might have questions about grid performance that affect decisions and situational awareness in the control room. Finance might be looking to increase the accuracy of budget forecasting in out years. Simply pulling data together will not provide answers to such complex questions. Analysts must have a clear idea of what they want to achieve and the information they need to reach their goals.

Bring data together for meaningful purposes. Because each business area's goals are intertwined with other departments, this step directly relates to the previous one. The answers to questions may be in multiple data sources across WAPA. Connecting and cataloging these data relationships will provide better WAPA-wide reporting and allow staff to focus on analyzing data rather than spending time identifying and collecting different data sets. Information Technology is spearhead-

ing this extensive undertaking in 2021, with the aid of new software and business partners throughout WAPA.

Create a culture of sharing information and trust. The key to overcoming WAPA's old, siloed approach to data collection is educating employees about the benefits of a successful data strategy, both to individuals and to WAPA. That outreach must also encourage a deeper understanding of how each department's data affects other departments.

As employees realize the value of others' data to their own work, they will make greater efforts to ensure the reliability of the data they produce. These efforts can begin by thinking about who might use your data, whether it is in an easily consumable format and how you could make your data more reliable and accessible.

Thoughtful and innovative management is something every WAPA employee can do to build trust in data as a tool.

2021: Year of Data Management

Every WAPA department and employee has a role to play in creating and managing data in a way that turns it into an asset.

At the department or business-unit level, managers can make data a priority and encourage and sponsor employees to be a part of data strategy teams. Employees can track where they get their data and consider what data skills their department has and what they need. Individuals should recognize the importance of data in their area and think about what data is important to their functions.

Watch *myWAPA* over the next few months for "Data Moments," more ideas for managing data. There will also be training opportunities coming in the spring to show employees how to make the most of Data as a Strategic Asset. □

Note: Storie is a technical writer who works under the Wyandotte Services contract.

TAP updates guide WAPA's strategic focus

A

s mentioned at the most recent All-Employee Meeting, the Tactical Action Plan is being updated for fiscal year 2021. What exactly does that mean, though? How are those updates made, and how do they benefit the organization?



“The TAP focuses on strategy within the two-to-three year range, helping WAPA to make decisions in the near term that will get the organization where it needs to be in the long term.”

It's best to start by looking at the big picture: *Strategic Roadmap 2024*. This is the document that defines WAPA's strategic focus. It was developed in 2014, and at that point it looked forward to a horizon that was 10 years away. The Roadmap itself will also be seeing a refresh in 2021.

As one might imagine, a lot changes in 10 years. Working toward goals that far out is beneficial for any organization, but that organization must also be agile enough to adjust trajectory when necessary.

That's where the Tactical Action Plan comes in. The TAP focuses on strategy within the two-to-three year range, helping WAPA to make decisions in the near term that will get the organization where it needs to be in the long term.

The Strategic Roadmap defines WAPA's focus as improving its Business, Technology and Organizational Excellence; building mutually beneficial partnerships across our numerous stakeholders, both internal and external; and evolving the services WAPA provides to meet customer needs. All of which contributes to WAPA better powering the energy frontier.

The TAP outlines the specific activities WAPA will focus on to achieve those critical pathways.

Even more granular is the Annual Plan, which has a scope of one year and which outlines very specifically what the organization will do within the year to achieve the goals laid out in the TAP.

Since WAPA's first TAP in 2014, the organization has consistently reduced

the number of TAP goals. This is intended to improve focus and alignment around the activities that will truly drive the organization to the next level.

The most recent TAP, developed in 2019, had 14 initiatives. In the spirit of continuous improvement and continuing to focus organizational priorities, WAPA again evaluated its TAP Goals when developing the Annual Plan for FY 2021.

During this evaluation, WAPA placed each goal into one of two categories: strategic goals, which are the efforts that will truly change WAPA's trajectory for customers, for employees or in the industry; and programmatic goals, which are primarily focused on continuously improving activities the organization already performs.

The breakdown of goals looked like this:

- **Strategic Goals:** Preparing for Markets; Fiber Partnerships; Data as a Strategic Asset; Human Performance / Just Culture; Program and Budget Integration; Organizational Approach to Markets (on hold)
- **Programmatic Goals:** Physical Security; Emergency Management; Cybersecurity; Transformer Management; Asset Management (Major and Additional Assets); Leadership Development; Acquisition Management

In order to accomplish strategic goals, a large percentage of the organization must work together for many

years to be successful. Programmatic goals are still very important to WAPA's success and the organization would be best served by empowering the relevant program managers to work with their stakeholders to continuously improve and develop their programs.

The goals identified as strategic were retained as TAP goals, for a total of six: Preparing for Markets; Organizational Approach to Markets; Fiber Partnerships; Data as a Strategic Asset; Human Performance / Just Culture; and Program and Budget Integration. Organizational Approach to Markets is on hold this year while the organization focuses on Preparing for Markets.

The TAP's four strategic enablers remain unchanged, as they are foundational for WAPA's mission success: Safety; Communication; Inclusion and Diversity; and Partnership and Innovation.

With the help of documents such as the TAP—and its improved focus—WAPA will continue to seek opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness to keep rates low and deliver value to customers, employees and the industry. □



Quarterly TAP updates are available to all employees. Visit [myWAPA, Programs, Strategic Planning](#) for updates and key strategic documents.



Keeping WAPA safe in 2021

By Jamie Withers

The new year marks a time to make resolutions and set goals. Safety and Occupational Health has done this as well, setting goals and objectives for 2021 dedicated to protecting WAPA's employees from injury and illness.

One of our goals is to review and enhance safety programs and policies through these objectives: updating the *Power System Safety Manual* and finalizing, publishing and distributing the newly revised WAPA Order 440.1 — Safety and Occupational Health Program.

Power System Safety Manual

The new year has begun on a positive note with the completion of our first objective, the newly updated PSSM, which has been distributed WAPA-wide.

The revised PSSM includes more than 50 updates suggested by WAPA employees, management and engineering. The policies outlined in the PSSM provide guidance and direction to prevent incidents resulting in personal injury, illness, property damage and work interruption.

WAPA Order 440.1

WAPA Order 440.1 has gone through an extensive review and update process that has included input from Safety, the Department of Energy and the Office of General Counsel.

The order establishes policy for implementation and administration of a safety program consistent with best industry practices and applicable rules and regulations. WAPA Order 440.1 and the PSSM are cornerstones of safety at WAPA that will set guidelines to help protect employees long into the future.

Another goal

Another goal we have this year is to improve Safety Program visibility, management awareness and employee involvement.

To this end, Safety will support WAPA's focus on Human Performance,

as stated in *Strategic Roadmap 2024*, to "Improve the design, operation and maintenance of WAPA's system by preventing, detecting and correcting human errors and organizational weaknesses that can impact safety, reliability and organizational effectiveness."

To advance this effort and promote a learning organization related to safety culture, Safety has developed a tiered approach to investigations based on the potential impact of a safety event or near miss.

In addition, Safety will prepare a Learning Summary for 90% of Occupational Safety and Health Administration recordable events and other incidents identified by the regions that may have led to injury or property damage. All Learning Summaries will be announced and posted on *myWAPA* to raise awareness and help prevent similar events in the future through information sharing and education.

Safety will also partner with Maintenance, union representatives and management to evaluate WAPA facilities and programs on an annual basis. These inspections and assessments give us the opportunity to proactively address hazards and ensure safe and healthy work conditions for all employees.

Upcoming developments

Have you ever had a safety concern and not known what to do about it? Safety, in partnership with Information Technology, is in the process of developing a "Report a Safety Concern" site, which will enable employees to report concerns and get direct safety manager follow-up.

When complete, employees will be able to fill out a simple electronic form and submit it to the Safety and Occupational Health Council. The appropriate regional Safety manager will

then respond to the concern, follow up with the employee and address corrective actions.

Safety will also develop a Corrective Action Program to monitor and manage Judgements of Need, corrective action timelines and effectiveness of corrective actions related to incidents and employee concerns WAPA-wide.

Join Safety and Occupational Health in promoting safety as a core value at WAPA by participating in program goals, objectives and improvements. We look forward to your input and ideas.

Most importantly, we ask you to be alert, safe and watch out for others. Our main goal is that everyone goes home safe at the end of the day. □

Note: Withers is the director of Safety and Occupational Health.

The roles of Safety and Occupational Health

Safety and Occupational Health plays a key role in helping to prevent safety incidents by providing oversight and assessing effectiveness of implementation of WAPA's safety and health program. This is accomplished through:

- Facility inspections
- Worksite observations
- Contractor document review
- Job Hazard Analysis review

Other key roles include preparation and update of documents that provide rules, guidelines, safety awareness and education for employees.

Safety and Occupational Health partners with Maintenance, Operations and regional offices to improve the safety of WAPA's work processes.

Rapid Recaps

WAPA hosts first virtual All-Customer Meeting

On Dec. 7, Administrator and CEO **Mark A. Gabriel** spoke at WAPA's first virtual All-Customer Meeting. Gabriel introduced "balance" as WAPA's theme for 2021, which captures the need for the organization to embody strength, resilience, unity and leadership while also being mindful of WAPA's enduring mission, reliability, regional differences and collaborative culture with customers.

He also reflected on WAPA's many accomplishments in 2020.

The meeting, held virtually for the first time ever as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, featured presentations by WAPA senior leadership and breakout sessions for in-depth discussions.

Other speakers included Department of Energy Acting Assistant Secretary for the Office of Electricity **Pat Hoffman**, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer **Mike Peterson**, Power Marketing Advisor **Rodney Bailey**, Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer **Mike Montoya** and Executive Vice President and Chief Operations Officer **Kevin Howard**.



View materials from the event, including a kickoff video and Gabriel's remarks and slide presentation, at wapa.gov, **The Source**, **Presentations and Speeches**



Brief Transmissions

Updates to WAPA's fitness reimbursement benefit

If you have signed up for or are thinking about signing up for a health-related fitness program, remember the reimbursement benefit available to federal employees through WAPA's fitness program.

The benefit allows employees to claim 50% of qualifying expenses up to \$1,000 for a maximum reimbursement of \$500. To claim the benefit, gather your receipts, calculate the 50% reimbursement rate for your expenses, fill out a Claim for Reimbursement form and check with your administrative officer to learn who in your region accepts the submitted claims.

Here are three updates to the fitness reimbursement benefit of which you should be aware:

- One claim per fiscal year. The program has been simplified so participants only submit one claim per fiscal year.
 - A claim can be submitted any time, but only once per fiscal year.
 - If you have not yet submitted a fiscal year 2020 claim, do so before Feb. 28, 2021.
 - For fiscal year 2021 and beyond, prior fiscal year claims must be submitted by Dec. 31.

- Term limit capped at 12 months. This means that your receipts must reflect a 12-month term for program participation or less.
- Updated list of qualifying and nonqualifying expenses.

What qualifies?

Participation or membership in an off-site facility or program whose primary objective is health-related fitness qualifies.

Examples of qualifying programs: gym membership; recreation center fitness membership; online fitness programs such as Peloton or Beachbody; health club membership such as Weight Watchers.

Examples of non-qualifying programs: skiing or pool passes; mountaineering; hiking; biking; fitness equipment; other leisure or recreational physical activities or clubs.



Find more information and answers to common questions at myWAPA, **Employee Resources**, **Fitness Program**

